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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Muslims in European Society
- [1](#)3. UN Reform

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Key stories in the media:  
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All major media highlighted the meeting between President Bush and PM Sharon at the UN on Wednesday, following the President's address to the UN General Assembly. Yediot and Maariv front-paged a handshake between the two leaders. Leading media noted that while in New York, Bush only met with Sharon, British PM Tony Blair, and China's President Hu Jintao.

The media reported that Bush told Sharon that he knew disengagement "was hard, but I admire your courage." Bush was quoted as saying: "Now is the time for Palestinians to come together and establish a government that will be peaceful with Israel. And Gaza is a good chance to start." Commentators wondered if that sentence also implied that further steps were required of Israel. Bush also told Sharon he was sure he would win the elections. Leading media quoted Bush as saying: "I am not interfering [in Israeli politics], but I am sure that if Gaza is quiet, it will help you." Jerusalem Post led with Sharon's comment to Bush that there will be no further steps in the diplomatic process if Gaza is not quiet. The media quoted Sharon as saying that Israel will not return to the Philadelphia route. Ha'aretz reported that Sharon told reporters after his meeting with the President that Bush has agreed that if the PA does not assert control over the Gaza Strip, the peace process will be unable to continue.

Leading Israeli news web sites, Israel Radio, and IDF Radio reported that this morning, the High Court of Justice unanimously upheld a petition submitted by Palestinian residents of several West Bank villages and ruled that the state must reconsider within reasonable time an alternative route for the separation fence in the area of the northern West Bank settlement of Alfei Menashe. A nine-justice panel headed by Supreme Court President Aharon Barak said the IDF must come up with new solutions that would not adversely affect the quality of life of Palestinian residents as severely as the current route does. IDF Radio cited the satisfaction of a representative of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel over the ruling. Fourteen months after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) released its ruling on the fence, the High Court was expected to say whether it accepts the Hague ruling as binding on Israel and define the ramifications of the ICJ decision for the High Court. Israel Radio said that the High Court's expected decision would facilitate its ruling on 44 pending petitions against the construction of the fence. The leading web site Ynet and Israel Radio reported that the High Court sharply criticized the ICJ ruling. The justices said

that the ICJ's conclusion regarding the issue of the separation fence in the West Bank is not a 'res judicata' (a judged matter) and does not necessitate the determination that all parts of the fence are contrary to international law. The radio quoted Chief Justice Aharon Barak as saying that it was rendered on an incomplete factual basis. The station quoted Barak's deputy, Justice Mishael Cheshin, as saying that the ICJ demonstratively and strangely ignored the security and terror problems that afflicted Israel. In a different context, Jerusalem Post quoted outgoing Defense Ministry Director General Amos Yaron as saying that the fence will be completed by the end of the year.

Jerusalem Post reported that PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas issued a stiff warning Wednesday to various armed militias responsible for the growing state of anarchy and lawlessness in PA-ruled territories. Yediot reported that the PA promised on Wednesday to close the opening in the fence along the Philadelphia road. Israel Radio quoted an Israeli military source as saying that Egypt will eventually seal the Gaza-Egypt border, and that the PA is aware that the present situation is not conducive to progress. Ha'aretz cited the IDF's concern about not only massive arms smuggling into Gaza, and consequently into the West Bank, but also, and particularly, about Al-Qaida operatives being able to enter Gaza freely. Yediot reported that Mahmoud Zahar, Hamas's leader in the Gaza Strip, told the Italian daily Corriere Della Sera that some Al-Qaida operatives have already infiltrated the Strip.

Leading media reported that Sharon met at the UN with Russian President Vladimir Putin, with whom he discussed the Iranian nuclear program, and with Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Ha'aretz reported that the U.S. also lobbied the UN against Iran's nuclear ambitions. Sharon also shook hands and briefly talked with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. Israel Radio quoted Sharon as saying he has been invited to visit Tunisia for a long time, but that the visit has not taken place because the Tunisians refuse to admit Sharon's armed bodyguards.

Leading media reported that, during the night, dozens of youths infiltrated the evacuated northern West Bank settlement of Sa-Nur, and that the police subsequently evacuated them.

Major media reported that former IDF chief of staff Moshe Ya'alon has decided to cancel a visit to London scheduled for next week, following an arrest warrant issued against him on charges of "war crimes."

Israel Radio reported that in a speech before the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, Qatari FM Hamad bin Jasim bin Jabir Al Thani praised Israel's decision to withdraw from Gaza, and called on the Arab states to make gestures toward Israel and to hold talks with the U.S. and Israel to advance chances of peace in the region. The minister warned that if the PA is unable to control events in the Gaza Strip, no progress could be made in the diplomatic process.

Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday, the Palestinian Religious Scholars Society issued a fatwa forbidding normalization with Israel. The fatwa came in response to a surprise ruling earlier this week by Muhammad Sayyed Tantawi, head of Egypt's Al-Azhar Mosque University, in favor of normalization with Israel.

Hatzofe printed a picture of Internal Security Minister Gideon Ezra bidding farewell to U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Kurtzer.

Leading media reported that President Bush has rejected Sharon's request that he pardon convicted spy Jonathan Pollard.

Ha'aretz, Yediot, and Jerusalem Post reported that the tourism ministers of Israel, the PA, Egypt, and Jordan, who met in the Egyptian resort of Hurghada on Wednesday, called on the U.S. and additional countries to rescind their travel warnings on the region.

Jerusalem Post reported that Iraqi politician Mithal al-Alusi returned to Israel this week to speak about the importance of standing firm against terror. Although he escaped an assassination attempt in Iraq, his two sons were killed in a similar attack.

#### Summary:

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Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote from New York on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "On Wednesday, [Sharon] heard from President Bush exactly what he wanted to hear -- that Gaza is the test."

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The exclamation point that Ariel Sharon placed at the gates of Gaza has been replaced by an unprecedented Palestinian question mark."

Very liberal columnist Yehuda Litani wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "Now, as the fog of disengagement dispels, we see that the spirit of Sheikh Yassin still rules between Gaza and Rafah, and very soon, also between Jenin and Hebron."

Yediot Aharonot editorialized: "[Some Israelis] think that a good Arab is a dead Arab, and [others] think that full guilt for the conflict between us and the Palestinians rests on our shoulders."

#### Block Quotes:

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#### I. "Gaza in New York"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote from New York on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (September 15): "The Palestinians cross Philadelphia Road freely while the Palestinian and Egyptian police are helpless, they plunder what remains of the Gush Katif settlements, allow masked men to display their guns in public and do their best to carry out what Sharon assessed would happen from the beginning. Sharon placed the Gaza trap at the Palestinians' doorstep, and as things look now from the prime minister's perspective, they fell right into it.... And he saw the Gaza trap working. On Wednesday, he heard from President Bush exactly what he wanted to hear -- that Gaza is the test. If Abu Mazen fails there, he can expect nothing in the West Bank. America will avoid putting pressure on Israel to get moving in the West Bank as long as it is displeased by the Palestinian Authority's performance in Gaza. In Sharon's view, disengagement created a situation in which he couldn't lose, a 'win-win-win' situation.... Abu Mazen will not be going to New York. In general, the Arab representation at the current UN General Assembly is sparse and low-profile. The stage is almost solely given to Sharon, and no wonder he is enjoying every minute."

#### II. "Now, It's the Palestinians' Turn"

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (September 15): "Now, after the last Israeli has come home, the disengagement has ceased to be an Israeli event.... Now, after the gate of the Kissufim checkpoint has been locked, the disengagement has become a Palestinian event. The exclamation point that Ariel Sharon placed at the gates of Gaza has been replaced by an unprecedented Palestinian question mark.... The Palestinians are trying to blur this decisive fact. They are behaving as if nothing has happened. They continue to use the old, anachronistic rhetoric that has become so nauseatingly familiar. They continue to claim that the Israeli withdrawal is incomplete and insufficient. They continue to declare that the struggle will continue until every bit of Palestinian land has been liberated. And even worse: by torching the synagogues and storming the Philadelphia route, they are signaling that they do not intend to behave as a responsible state.... But precisely if the Palestinians do want to advance toward further Israeli withdrawals, they must quickly ... change their ethos.... If they choose life, order and neighborliness, the sky is the limit. If they choose death, chaos and victimhood, the road to hell is short. But either way, this time, the Palestinians will not be able to blame anyone else. The choice is in their hands. Following the disengagement, it is the Palestinians who bear principal responsibility for their own fate, their own future and their own actions."

#### III. "Sheikh Yassin Returns to Gaza"

Very liberal columnist Yehuda Litani wrote in Yediot Aharonot (September 15): "Now, after disengagement, there is an interim situation, where on the face of it, the Palestinian Authority and its leader, Mahmoud

Abbas, rule. However, the real rulers, both in the Gaza Strip as well as in the West Bank, are Hamas militants. Abu Mazen, who fears them, knows deep down that he is incapable of disarming them even though he declared two days ago that he would do this immediately after elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council early next year.... After the thorny path of the moderate Palestinian option, the Jordanian option and the PLO option, we now face the only option left: Islam zealots who believe that the entire land, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, must be liberated from any Israeli presence. Even if in public they present more moderate positions in the next while, in their hearts they believe that the entire land is Wakf, a sacred trust that cannot be conceded by even one centimeter. And while a majority of Israelis are now willing to make considerable concessions, the majority of Palestinians more and more support extremist Hamas positions. Now, as the fog of disengagement dispels, we see that the spirit of Sheikh Yassin still rules between Gaza and Rafah, and very soon, also between Jenin and Hebron."

#### IV. "Seekers of Absolute Justice"

Yediot Aharonot editorialized (September 15): "The love that the members of [the Israeli peace group] Yesh Gvul have for their country is so great that they cannot bear its flaws. Only a perfect country can match the power of their love. When they find a defect that is not immediately rectified, they go looking for foreigners to bring the country back to the straight and narrow. The courts to which Yesh Gvul submits its complaints, do not dwell in countries free of any moral stains. Each of them has a long track of crimes against humanity, and perhaps for this reason, they wish to cleanse their crimes by means of putting others on trial. This argument is of no interest to the patriots from Yesh Gvul. For them, even those whose hands are soaked in blood are fit to scrub our sins and to put our leaders to a standard of behavior that is impossible in the real world. In the real world, there are people who aspire to achieve their political goals at any price, even at the price of mass murder. Sometimes there is no choice but to kill them, and frequently it is not possible to fish them out of the surroundings that provide them with shelter and support for their acts.... Two kinds of wise people have ready answers to all [related] questions: those who think that a good Arab is a dead Arab, and those who think that full guilt for the conflict between us and the Palestinians rests on our shoulders, because withdrawal from the occupied territories will turn the Palestinians into innocent lambs, and until that time, all the terrorists and those who send them must be considered freedom fighters. This appears to be the view of Yesh Gvul. This explains their lawsuits to [Israel's] Supreme Court, and this explains their desire to put IDF officers in foreign jails."

#### ----- 12. Muslims in European Society: -----

##### Summary: -----

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Europeans should know ... that the fundamentalist Muslim community in Europe which seeks to delegitimize Jews and the Jewish state is the same community that evidently spawned the murderous bombings in Madrid and London."

##### Block Quotes: -----

##### "Muslim Intolerance"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (September 15): "It is obvious that values the West holds dear, such as fairness, equality, and cultural pluralism are simply thrown out the window when resisting the intolerance of a billion Muslims is weighed against offending a few million Jews. Further, it is assumed that compromising Western values at the Jews' expense is simply that -- a Jewish problem. It is not. The intolerance shown toward Jews can be and is shown toward Christians, such as the recent rampage against Palestinian Muslims against Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem. The massacres of Christians in Sudan are another example, as is the destruction by the Taliban of the ancient Bamiyan Buddhas in 2001. Europe is hardly immune from such predations, as the continent is belatedly discovering.... Across Europe, governments have refused to admit the extent to which

fundamentalist Muslims have been responsible for anti-Semitic violence. Similarly, they have been reticent to confront the increasingly brazen fundamentalists within their midst. Europeans should know, however, that the fundamentalist Muslim community in Europe which seeks to delegitimize Jews and the Jewish state is the same community that evidently spawned the murderous bombings in Madrid and London. The fight for freedom from Islamist terrorism begins with basic insistence on the rights of all non-Muslims, including the Jewish people. The alternative, appeasement, has not worked well in the past, and is likely to invite even more Muslim intolerance in the future."

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13. UN Reform:  
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Summary:  
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Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "There is no other country that shares with the U.S. such an unequivocal interest in UN reforms."

Block Quotes:  
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"Drawing Up a New World Order"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (September 15): "Here's an opening sentence that could be used by rivals of both Israel and the United States, but at its foundation is a fact that cannot be avoided: if the American maneuvering succeeds and it manages to find agreement for sweeping UN reforms, no country will gain from it as much as Israel. Moreover, there is no other country that shares with the U.S. such an unequivocal interest in UN reforms.... For some years, the U.S. has felt that this organization, which it hosts, is isolated and blocked. Therefore, and not because of Israel, it began such a sweeping drive, so obviously necessary, to correct it.... After 60 years, the UN is going back to the drawing board, while in its corridors float the innocent ideas raised by Wilson, who envisioned an institutional spirit that would reflect the 'moral position of humankind.' It's not a steering committee of global superpowers that the Americans want, but an organization that will advance values that are not shared right now by all its members: democracy, human rights, equality. Or maybe they simply want to destroy the UN. It's possible to suspect that, too, passed through their minds."

KURTZER